

Edwards Honored with the Pinnacle Award from Fleet Reserve Association for Support of Navy, Marines, Coast Guard

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Representative Chet Edwards was honored with the 2009 Pinnacle Award from the national military and veterans group Fleet Reserve Association (FRA). The award, given to only one Member of Congress, comes as a direct result of the support Congressman Edwards provided to America's enlisted military personnel, retirees, veterans, and their families through his leadership as Chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee.

Edwards receives the Pinnacle Award from FRA National President Donald Nucheck. Photo courtesy of Edwards.

"I am honored by this award," said Edwards. "It is a privilege to work alongside the Fleet Reserve Association to improve health care and benefits for those men and women of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard who sacrifice daily in service to our country," said Edwards.

Since becoming Chairman of the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee in 2007, Edwards authored legislation increasing veterans' health care and benefits by \$16.3 billion, the largest veterans funding increase in the history of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Edwards was also recognized for his leadership in halting health care fee increases proposed for military retirees.

"There is much more work to do, but this historic funding increase represents a new day for America's veterans and their families, who have earned every dime of it through their service and sacrifice for country," said Edwards.

FRA's prestigious Pinnacle Award is presented annually to a member of Congress who has championed improved quality of life for military personnel, retirees, veterans and their families. In an effort to curb TRICARE fee hikes, Edwards introduced legislation (H.R. 816) in the 111th Congress that would prohibit Department of Defense (DoD) from raising TRICARE fees without congressional approval. FRA strongly endorsed this measure.

"FRA's top priority is ensuring adequate funding for Department of Defense (DoD) and VA health care programs," explained Joe Barnes, FRA's national executive director. "This is an ongoing challenge as health care costs are rising, the population needing military and VA medical care is growing, and there are continuing recommendations and budgetary pressures to shift costs to beneficiaries. Representative Edwards has been a stalwart champion for health care funding in both the DoD and VA arenas."

FRA is a congressionally chartered, non-profit organization representing the interests of current

and former enlisted members of the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

-30-